

5. Conclusions

Sub-Project 2 has reinforced the belief that across Europe there is common understanding of the meaning of strategic planning; as a process undertaken to determine an appropriate programme of measures to implement stated policy aims and objectives. More specially Strategic Planning is defined as follows:

- it a proactive rather than reactive process of analysis
- it considers a board range of options – both structural and non-structural such as:
 - all key consequences associated with action and in-action
 - regulation of urban development
 - structural intervention
 - improved public preparedness
 - better emergency responses
 - insurance / compensation
- it encourages co-operation between stakeholders (including NGOs, Governments and the public)
- it promotes long-term thinking and sustainability
- it provides an opportunity to undertake assessment of risks at the widest possible scale.

The process of Strategic Planning is, however, approached differently and has a different emphasis within each COMRISK partner country. In all Partner countries steps have been made towards this goal and tools are being developed to support (for example the RASP methods in the UK). These differences reflect different risk perceptions, society expectations and tradition. For example, throughout the continental European partners legislative instruments continue to provide the primary management tool, with prescribed safety standards (reflecting land use) and inspection intervals. Within England and Wales a more risk-based approach is adopted based on a more explicit trade-off of benefits and costs of action against the dis-benefits of in-action (with the exception of London where prescribed safety standards are provided by law). These differences are reflected in the way expenditure is prioritised. Within the context of a safety standards led approach prioritisation of expenditure is given little prominence within the strategic planning process and it is difficult (and often politically undesirable) to explicitly prioritise improvement to one defence over an other. The approach adopted in England and Wales, however, has a primary focus on prioritising actions in order of economic efficiency (taking account of both tangible and intangible benefits where possible).

Today across Europe, most countries are moving towards flood risk management based not just on predictions of the probabilities of defence overtopping under given events but also on prediction of the probability of an overall defence failure (e.g. dike breaching), the flooding consequences and their assessment in socio-economic terms. It will take time to establish a fully risk-based approach to strategic planning. This will need to consider a 'whole system' model of flooding including source, pathways and receptors, over the relevant planning timescale. It will also need to include a wide range of flood risk management options. While widely accepted as a key requirement for better flood risk management in the future, it is not yet fully reflected in present day practice.

6. Literature

SAYERS PB and MEADOWCROFT IC. – Report of COMRISK Subproject 2: Strategic Planning. HR Wallingford and Environment Agency, 2004